Content Services

Content Syndication User Guide

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Office of the Associate Director for Communications (OADC)
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
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Content Syndication 101

What is Content Syndication?

Content Syndication is a method by which web material is made available to other websites and digital channels. More specifically, it's a technical application that provides automatically updated CDC.gov content to partner websites, widgets, apps, and feeds. Syndication allows federal public health agencies, state and local public health departments, nonprofit organizations, academic institutions, and commercial organizations to easily gain direct access to CDC's health information, without having to monitor and copy updates or maintain similar content on their own. When CDC's syndicated



content is updated at the source, it is also updated in real-time on partner sites, requiring little effort from the development staff to keep the pages up to date. Content Syndication is a communication tool that provides the latest science-based information for use across multiple digital channels.

Content Syndication presents CDC web content within the look and feel of your site, and allows you to integrate CDC information with your local information. Visitors can remain on your site, and do not have to follow links to view information from CDC.gov.

CDC syndicates a wide range of health-related topics, including seasonal flu, other infectious diseases, chronic diseases, and emergency preparedness. We are also working with HHS, FDA, NIH and others to create a distributed network of content providers so that our users can get information from multiple sources on a variety of topics. Many syndicated pages are also available in Spanish. You may search available topics in our Content Syndication catalog at http://tools.cdc.gov/syndication.



How Does It Work?

The "how" of Content Syndication is really quite simple. CDC provides an application programming interface (API) that enables you to display CDC.gov content on your website. The API is a way for two computer applications to talk to each other in a common language that they both understand. CDC's API provides a structured way for you to get CDC content in a predictable, flexible and powerful format. Using API technology, CDC can assign a unique campaign ID that can be used for collecting metrics.

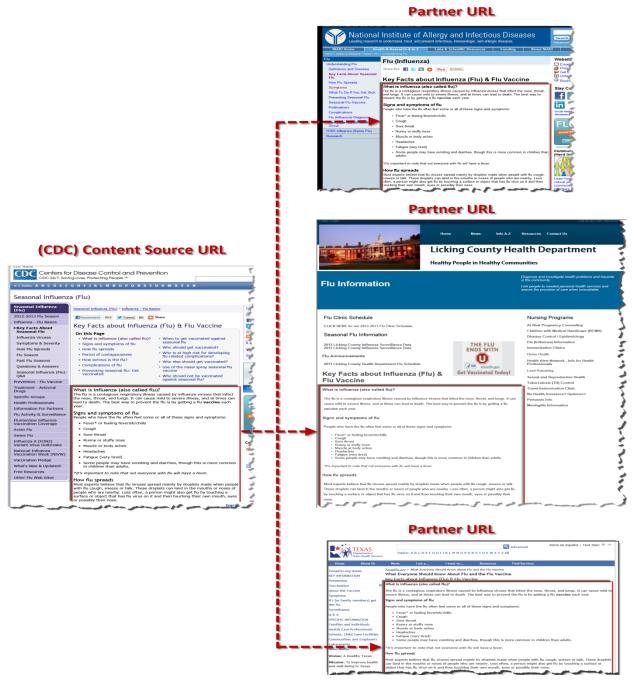


Figure 1 - Content Syndication High Level Diagram



It's a WIN - WIN Situation

In working with our state, local, tribal and even international partners we have discovered that many users are faced with the following challenges when updating and maintaining content on their sites:

- Monitoring source content on other sites is a time-consuming burden.
- Cutting-and-pasting content from other sites may lead to errors and out of date information.

 Information may appear contradictory or inconsistent between partner sites.
- Managing updates during public health emergencies is especially difficult as information is rapidly changing.
- There may be limited resources for developing new public health content or content in multiple languages for diverse constituencies.
- And frankly, everyone is just TOO BUSY.

Benefits to You

In order to meet these challenges, syndication allows you to:

- Free your staff from monitoring source content on other sites.
- Enjoy automatic updates to syndicated content. When source content is updated, those changes appear on your syndicated pages in real time.
- Be secure in the knowledge that information on your site is consistent with what appears on source pages.
- Focus on local updates during public health emergencies.
- Maintain your site's look-and-feel while using CDC content free of charge to provide information on new or emerging topics, and in multiple languages.
- Keep visitors on your site while taking advantage of CDC's breadth and depth of content across
 multiple topics, from emergency and bioterrorism to chronic disease, vaccines, outbreaks, and
 more.
- Create a site that is both comprehensive and far reaching. Much of our content is geared toward the public to provide accurate and actionable information to those who need it the most. Providing this level of information to your users will bring them back to your site over and over again.



The CDC and Content Syndication History

When public health events occur there is often a need for current information, including immunization recommendations, vaccine stockpile status reports, food safety warnings, and emergency preparedness information to be made available on State and local health department sites. The dynamic nature of this information can make it very difficult for a health department that is already dealing with the event to keep current information on their website for their constituents.



During the H1N1 event of 2009 – 2010, CDC was made aware of several sites where recommendations that had been cut-and pasted into state and county sites was out of date and conflicted with current information from CDC and other sources. Taking a cue from broad content delivery mechanisms such as the Associated Press and NPR, CDC set out to create a content syndication engine to alleviate pressure on state and local sites dependent on up-to-date CDC content. The goal was to ensure that the content delivered to end users reflected the current state of the content on the CDC website.

It is also important that local websites can seamlessly integrate CDC content as they choose. In many cases local messages, such as the location and times of vaccination clinics, or state response information, can be integrated with broader CDC information. Your visitors get local content, plus CDC content, in one place – your local site.

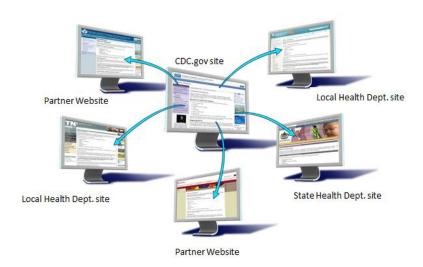


The Benefits for CDC as the Content Provider

Last, but not least, what's in it for CDC?

- Wider distribution of public health messages
- Increased views of our content
- Consistent information messaging across multiple sites and less concern over content attributed to us may be outdated.

For CDC, the largest benefit is broader distribution of important, accurate, and up-to-date public health information. For you, Content Syndication will allow you to create a site that is both wide and deep, and provides information to your users that may bring them back to your website more often.



One Source, Many Destinations



Welcome to Content Syndication

Content Syndication is a self-registration site that allows users to browse CDC content and get the required code for syndication. The Content Syndication website can be found at http://tools.cdc.gov/syndication. It takes only a few simple steps to get things started.

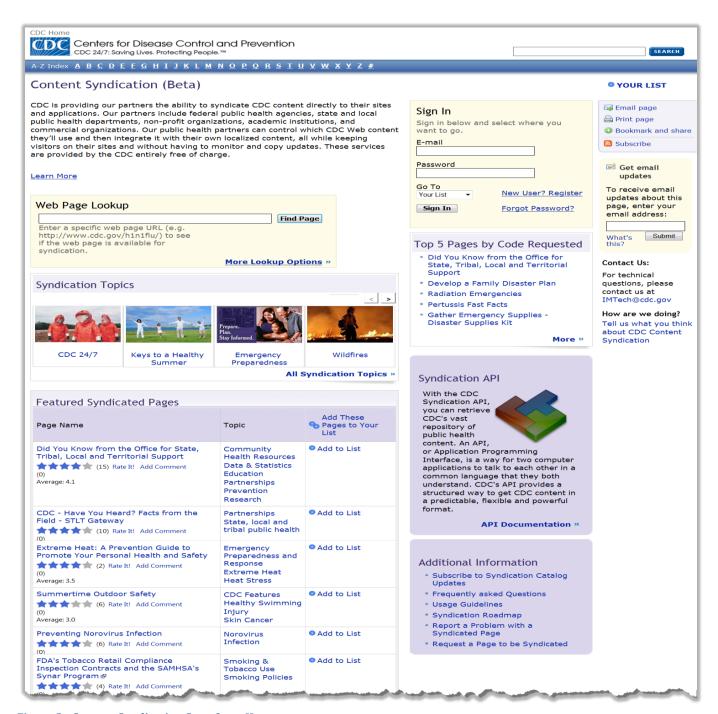


Figure 2 - Content Syndication Storefront Homepage

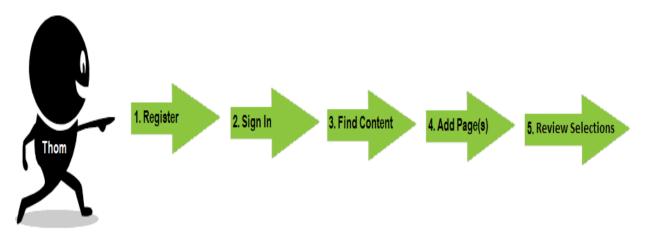


Start the Syndication Process in 5 Easy Steps

Step 1 - Register at http://www.cdc.gov/syndication/Step 2 - Sign In at http://www.cdc.gov/syndication/

Step 3 - Explore and Find Content Step 4 - Add Pages to Your List

Step 5 - Review Selections and Finalize







Step 1 - Register

Note: If you have previously registered, skip this step and go directly to Sign In.

You (the Subscriber) are encouraged to **register** to syndicate CDC content to your website. To begin the registration process, click on the <u>New User? Register</u> link from the Content Syndication Homepage. The Register window will pop-up. After you enter the required information, an email will be sent to the address you provided. This email will contain a unique Registration ID that can be used for tracking web metrics.

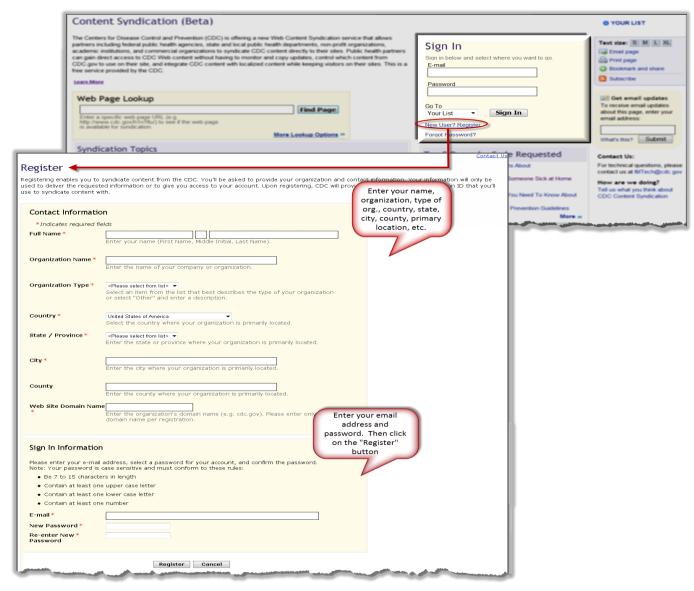


Figure 3 - Register





Step 2 - Sign In

After the Registration process is complete, you will be able to Sign In. Sign in using the same email address and password you provided during registration.



Figure 4 - Sign In



Your Account

The **Your Account** page allows you to change your password or update your email address.

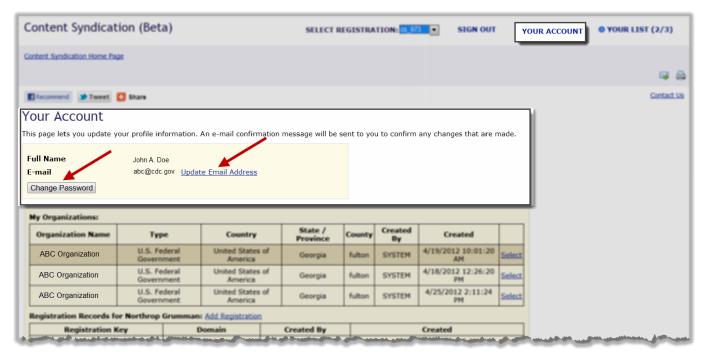


Figure 5 - Your Account





Step 3 - Find Content

Thousands of CDC web pages are available and waiting for syndication. There are several ways to go about finding out if the content you are seeking is available.

- Featured Syndicated Pages
- Web Page Lookup
- More Lookup Options
- Syndication Topics
- Top Rated Pages

Note: All the Storefront content lists share the same basic format and structure.



Figure 6 - Find Content





Step 4 - Add Page(s) to "Your List"

The **Add to List** function moves your selected pages to **Your List**. In the example below, 3 items were added. The **0** represents new items and the **3** represent total items in the list. As a reminder, if you select an item that is already in Your List the number will not change because the list does not allow duplicate selections.

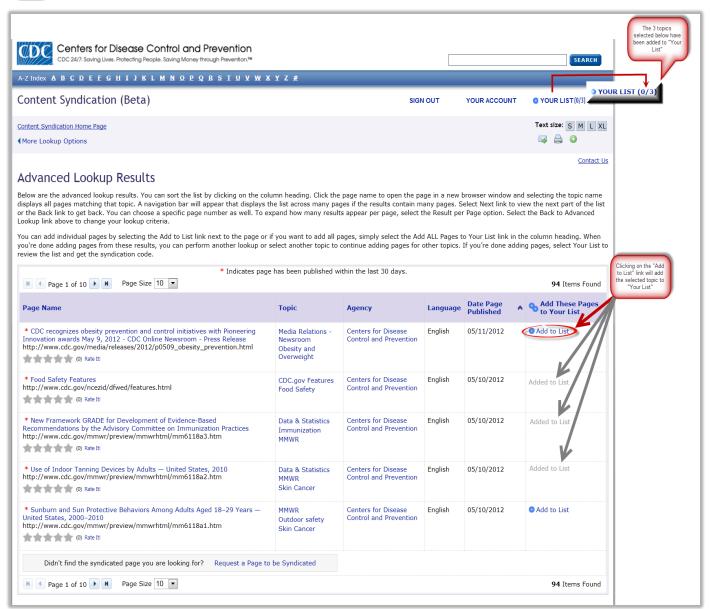


Figure 7 - Add Pages to Your List



Column Headings Defined

The column headings in the (Advanced Lookup Results) table are defined below:



Figure 8 - Column Heading Defined (Your List Table)

Page Name – Contains the content item name and links to the original source.

Topic(s) – Contains the list of topics to which the given content item is associated. Clicking on a Topic name will display a list of related content associated with that particular topic.

Agency – Contains the name of the content provider for a given content item. Clicking on an Agency name will display a list of related content associated with that particular agency.

Language – Contains the language of the given content item.

Date Page Published – Contains the date an item was added or republished to the catalog. This date may not be the same as the date the page was created or updated.

Add These Pages to Your List – The Add to List links will place selected items on Your List.





Step 5 - Review Your Selections

Click on **Your List** to view all the pages you have selected for a final review.

Besides maintaining a running list of potential syndication items, **Your List** also provides options for customization:

- Float Image CSS i.e. default(un-styled), Left or Right (see <u>Select Image Placement</u>)
- Add Host Page URL to each selected page for syndication (see <u>Host Page URL column</u>)
- Get Syndication Code
- View newly requested or all previously added pages

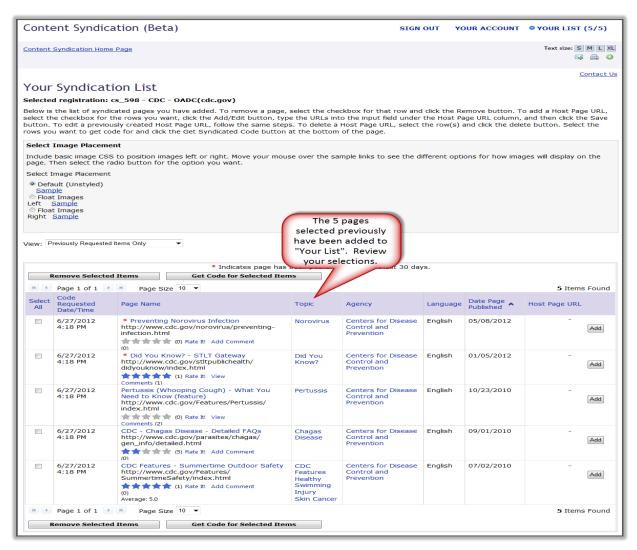


Figure 9 - Review Your Selections

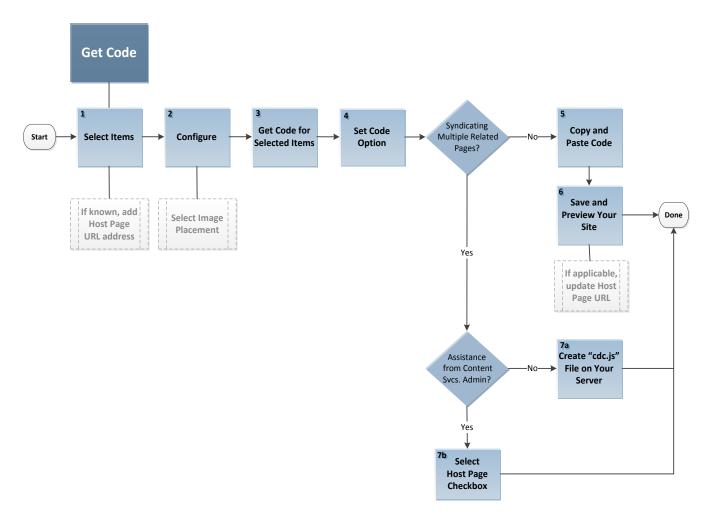


Get the Code

Once the 5 Steps from the previous sections have been completed, you are ready to get the code. The process flowchart below has been provided to walk you through each step of the way. The steps have been broken down for the most novice user.

Get Code

- 1. Select Items
- 2. <u>Configure (Selection Placement)</u>
- 3. Get Code for Selected Items
- 4. Set Code Option (XHTML or XML)
 - Syndicating Multiple Related Pages?
 - Assistance from Content Services Admin?
- 5. Copy / Paste Code
- 6. Save and Preview Your Site
 - ➤ If applicable, update Host Page URL
- 7a. Create "cdc.js" File on Your Server
- 7b. Select Host Page Checkbox





1. Select Items

At this point you should already know how to <u>Sign In</u> or perhaps you're already signed in. All that's left to do in this step is to select the items you wish to syndicate.

On this page you'll also have the ability to:

- Select Image Placement
- Sort the list by clicking on the column heading
- View the actual website under the **Page Name** column, by clicking the corresponding link
- View all pages matching a specific topic, under the **Topics** column
- Remove pages from the list by selecting the **Remove Selected Items** button
- Add a Host Page URL

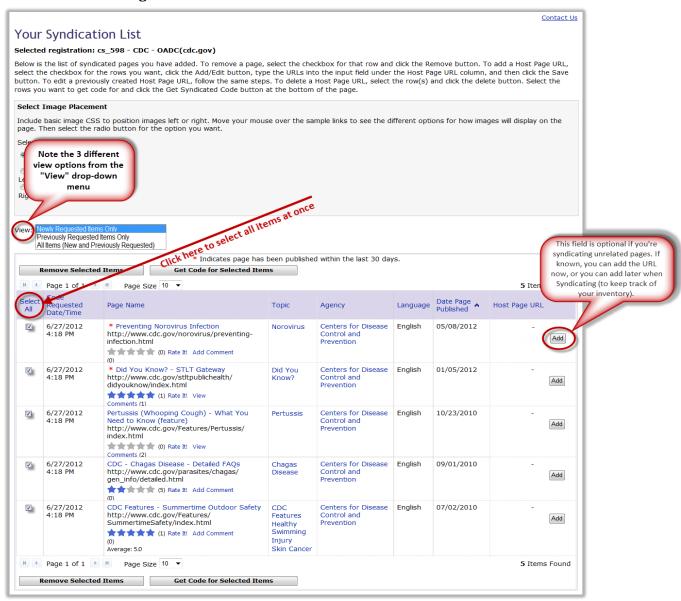


Figure 10 - Select Items



If Known, Add Host Page URL

This field is optional if you're not syndicating multiple related pages. However, we recommend completing the Host Page URL in any case, as it is a good way to keep track of your inventory. When entering the URL information, be sure to include the entire URL address.

Keep in mind, Host Page URL represents:

- Your site
- The location of the code placement
- Where the actual content will be hosted

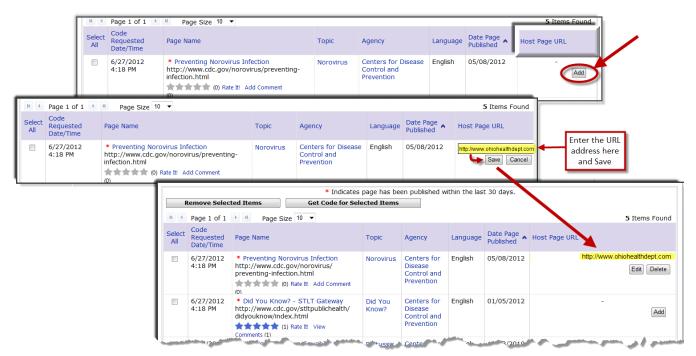


Figure 11 - Host Page URL column



2. Configure

Select Image Placement

CDC allows you to select basic CSS styles for image alignment on syndicated content. Run your mouse over the sample links to see the different options for how images will display on the page and select image placement of your choice. The options are left floating, right floating, or default location.

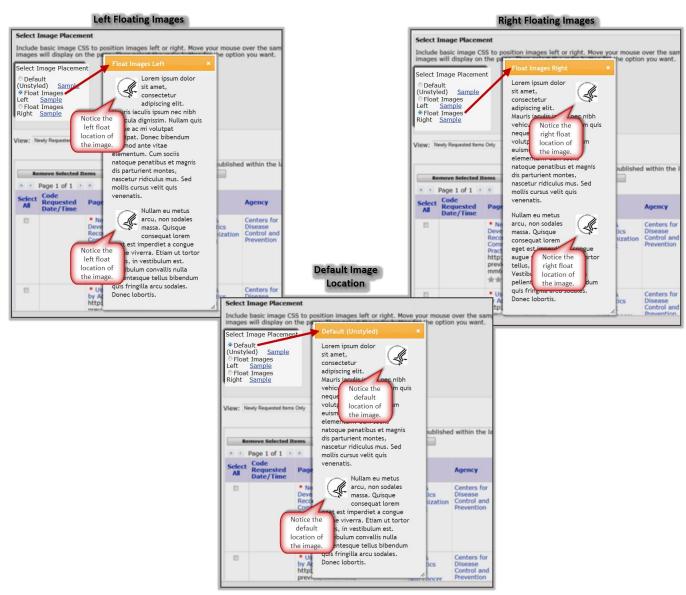


Figure 12 - Select Image Placement



3. Get Code for Selected Item

When you're satisfied with this list and ready to get the syndication code, select the **Get Code for Selected Items** button below.

Note: You'll be required to "Sign In" to get the syndication code, if you are not currently signed in.

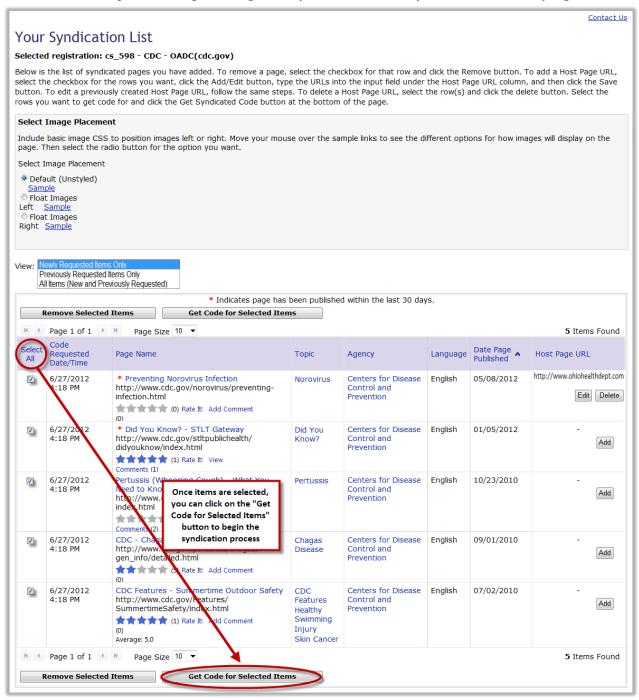


Figure 13 - Get Code for Selected Item button



4. Set Code Option

There are two code output formats to choose from: **XHTML** or **XML**. The XHTML output format is the default and by far the most popular option. It is highly recommended that Users accept the XHTML default option. The XML output option is an advanced feature.

There are two different methods for retrieving pages: **Client-side JavaScript** and **Server-side JavaScript**. Client-side is easier and faster to implement, requires only HTML and JavaScript knowledge. It's also the most popular method used to syndicate content.

Note: Server-side syndication requires understanding of REST interfaces and is more difficult to implement. If in doubt, select the XHTML output format (default) and the Client-side JavaScript method.

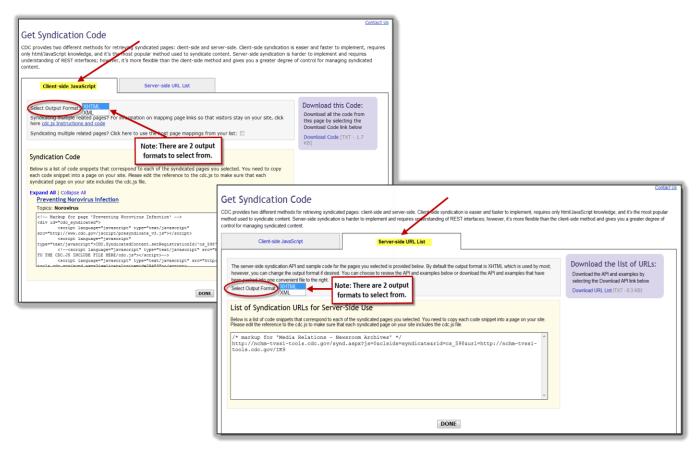


Figure 14 - Set Code Option



5. Copy and Paste Code

Just copy and paste the code into your website. When this step is complete, your website should display syndicated text and images. If you are syndicating multiple related pages, you'll move on to step <u>7a</u> or <u>7b</u>.

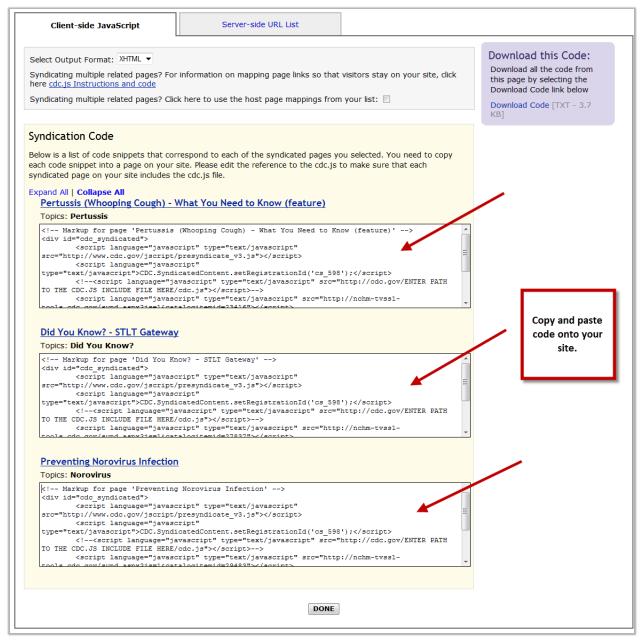


Figure 15 - Get Syndication Code



Download Code Link

You can also copy and paste the code via the Download Code link. The download code text file will contain code for syndicating ALL the pages you selected.

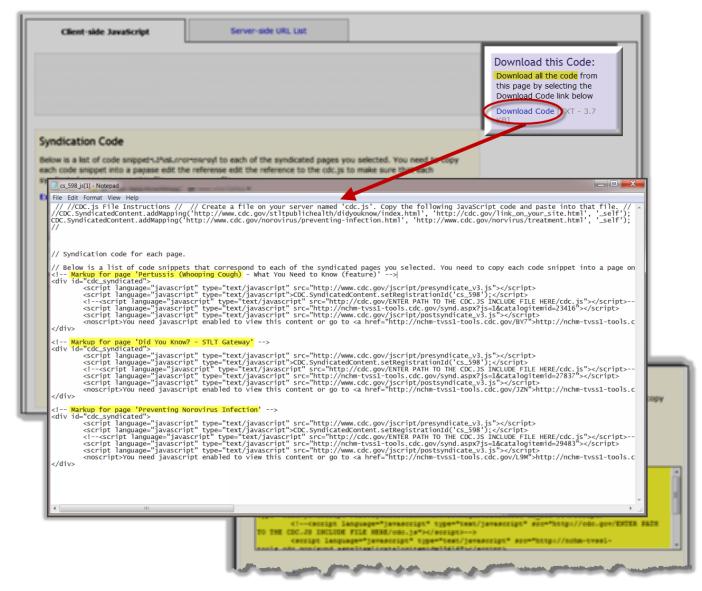


Figure 16 - Download Code and Instruction for cdc.js File



6. Save and Preview Your Site

Once your code has been downloaded, save it and preview your website to see exactly how it will appear when the page goes live.

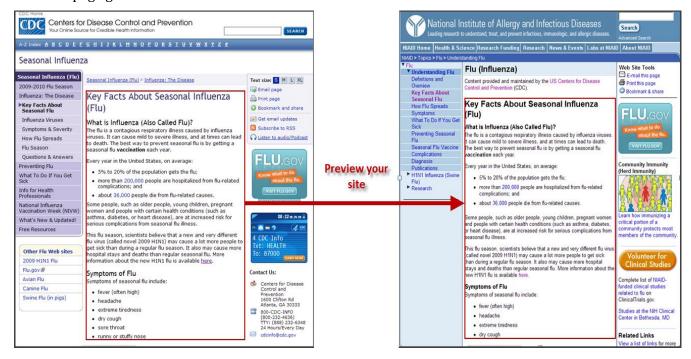


Figure 17 - Preview Your Site



7a. Create cdc.js File on Your Server

Syndicating multiple related pages? If so, the next step is to create a JavaScript file on your server and name it "cdc.js". To create the cdc.js file, you will need to copy and paste the syndication code into a JavaScript file (js) and place that file on your server. This file allows you to tell the system to change any embedded links to other pages you are syndicating to keep the visitor on your site.

For example, Page A is linked to Page B. You want to syndicate and link both Pages A and B. With the cdc.js file in place, the system will replace the link that goes to CDC.gov and redirect to Page B on your site. In other words, the link will recycle back to your site, instead of going to the CDC.gov website.

A reference to this file should be included in all the syndicated pages on your site. Remember to edit the mapping reference for each syndicated page. Enter your URL that maps to the corresponding CDC page.

To ensure the proper syndication of multiple related pages, you will need to make sure the page links are mapped and updated. For assistance, click on the link for **cdc.js instructions and code**.

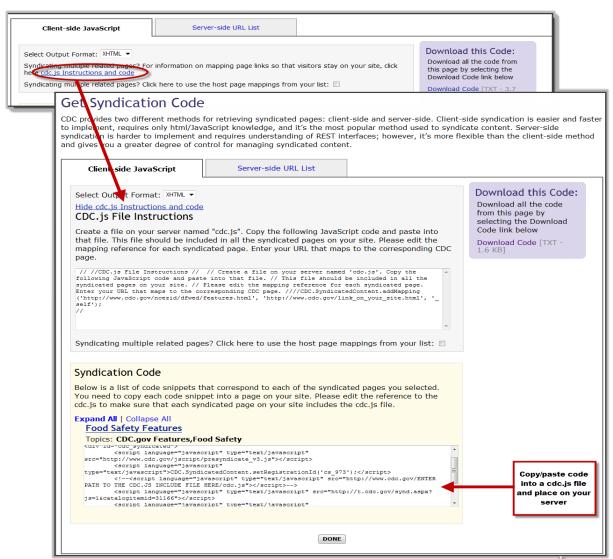


Figure 18 - Create cdc.js File



7b. Select Host Page Mapping Checkbox

If you are syndicating multiple related pages and would like the Content Services Administrator to handle the host page mapping for you, be sure to select the checkbox next to **Click here to use the host page mappings from your list:**

The Host Page URL address must be previously added to Your Syndication List before this option can take effect. Ideally, the Host Page URL address should be entered during the <u>Select Items</u> phase.

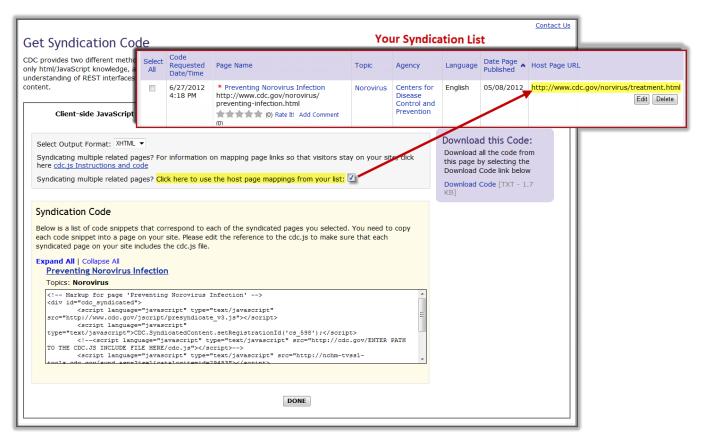


Figure 19 - Host Page Mapping Checkbox



What's in a Code Block?

The syndication code block can present a challenge, especially for the non-technical person.

Below is block of code. Let's examine the code line-by-line, part-by-part.

```
Untitled - Notepad
    File Edit Format View Help
11
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11
11
111
11
111
111
1111
11111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111<pe>11111111111<p
    </div>
```

Figure 20 - Code Block example

Here is a brief description of each line of the code block and what that line does.

- 1. Markup comment For each page, the code includes a comment at the top to help identify the content that is being added to the hosting page via syndication.
- 2. Outer wrapper div The code block provided by the system includes a div with and element id of "cdc_syndicated" this elementid can be used in CSS to manipulate the child elements of the syndicated content.
 - *Optional CSS link (not shown above) If the user selected one of the basic CSS files available from CDC, then the second line of code will be a link command that links to the selected CSS file on CDC's website.
- 3. Pre-syndicate script Sets up some objects in the JavaScript environment that will be used to hold the registration id, URL mappings etc., for use in the post-syndicate script. Sometimes CDC will place web-based survey code in this file, but this will affect only customers who have agreed to allow these surveys to occur on their sites.
- 4. Setting the registration id The registration id will be appended to content links that are inbound to CDC; this will allow CDC to track its inbound click-through metrics from syndicated content. This id will be used also as part of the metrics call that is added to the content to help CDC track page views of syndicated content.
 - 4a The optional CDC.js file call The optional CDC.js file is a JavaScript file in which a partner can set up URL mappings to keep an external website user on the partner's site when the user navigates between pages containing interrelated syndicated content.
- 5. The content request script This is the call to the Content Services API at CDC to retrieve the content to embed in the hosting page. This call usually takes one of two forms:
 - http://t.cdc.gov/synd.aspx?js=1&catalogitemid=27111
 - http://t.cdc.gov/synd.aspx?js=1&url=http://t.cdc.gov/ckt
 - 5a Optional call to the mapping API to get the page mappings hosted in the syndication system. This call replaces 4a, when selected.
- 6. Post-syndicate script
- 7. No Script

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Content Syndication Storefront Homepage Features

The Content Syndication Storefront Homepage provides additional information about the Content Syndication website and application features.

Learn More

The Learn More page proves to be a quick overview and reference guide for Content Syndication features.

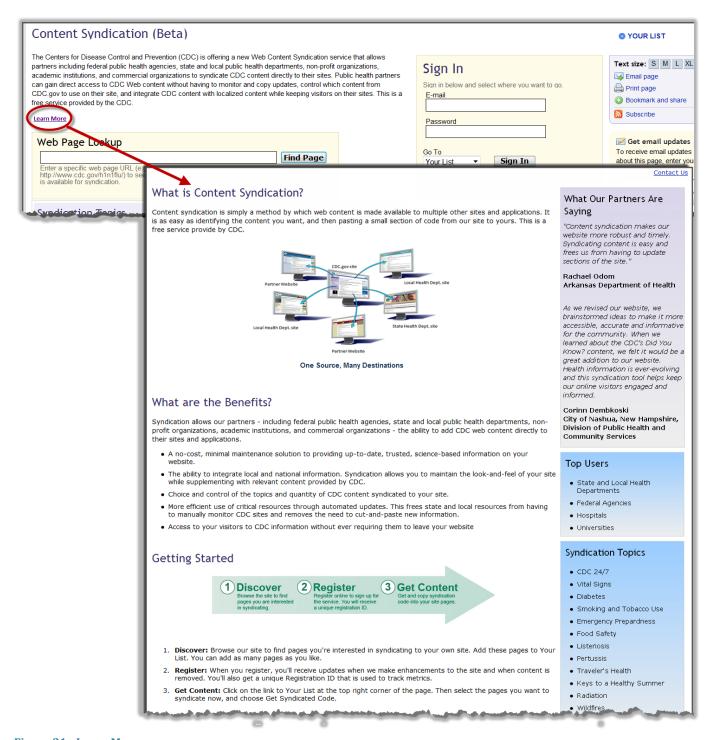


Figure 21 - Learn More



More Lookup Options

The More Lookup Options link opens the Advanced Lookup window. The Advanced lookup page allows you to find topics based on your specific criteria.

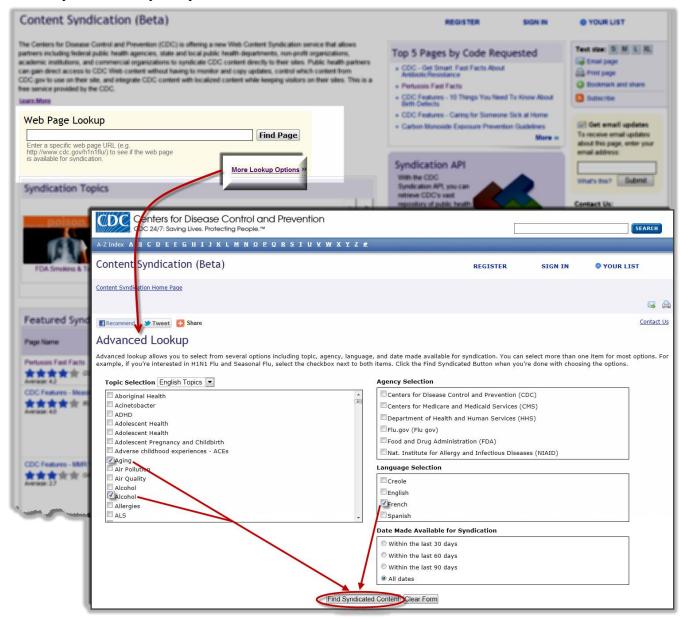


Figure 22 - More Options



All Syndication Topics

You may also view a full list of topics for which we have syndicated content by clicking the All Syndication Topics links.



Figure 23 - All Syndication Topics



Featured Syndicated Pages

The Featured Syndicated Pages section displays pages based on current health related challenges and pages that are popularly syndicated.

Additional features in this section include the following:

- Rate It
- Comments

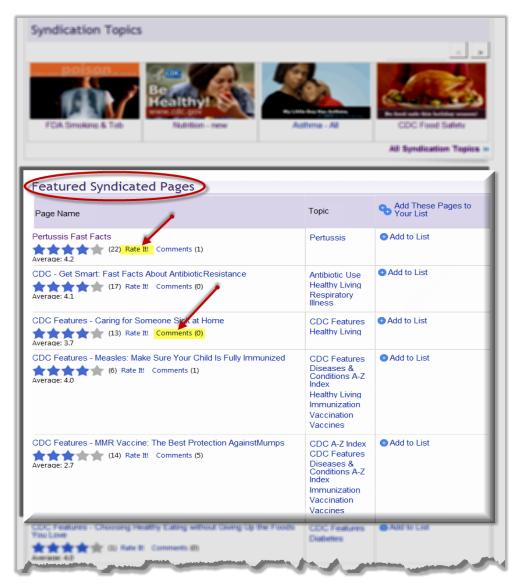


Figure 24 - Featured Syndicated Pages



Rate It

The Rate It feature gives you the ability to rate an item directly by clicking on the star. A cumulative average score from all raters is also displayed.



Figure 25 - Rate It



Comments

We encourage your comments regarding your usage of the Content Syndication application and have provided a comment box for each syndicatable item.

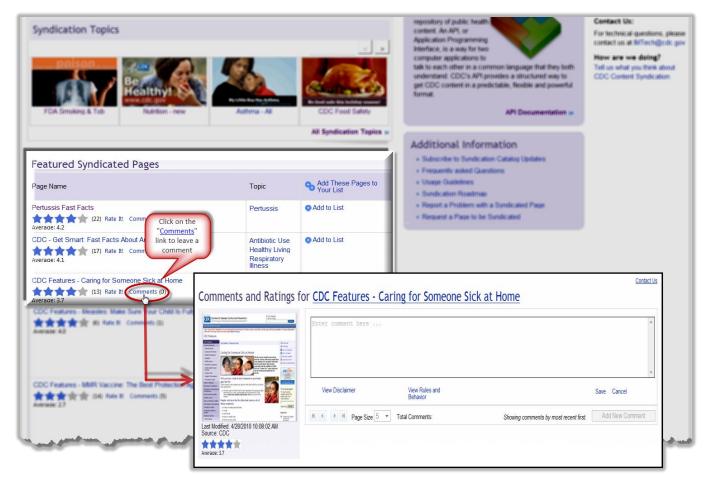


Figure 26 - Comments box



Top 5 Pages by Code Requested

This section displays the top 5 requested pages for syndication by our partners. A comprehensive and extended list can be accessed by clicking on the **More** link.



Figure 27 - Top 5 Pages by Code Requested



Syndication API

With the CDC Syndication API, you can retrieve CDC's vast repository of public health content. An API, or Application Programming Interface, is a way for two computer applications to talk to each other in a common language that they both understand. CDC's API provides a structured way to get CDC content in a predictable, flexible and powerful format.

The **API Documentation** link provides a more detailed and comprehensive look at this topic.

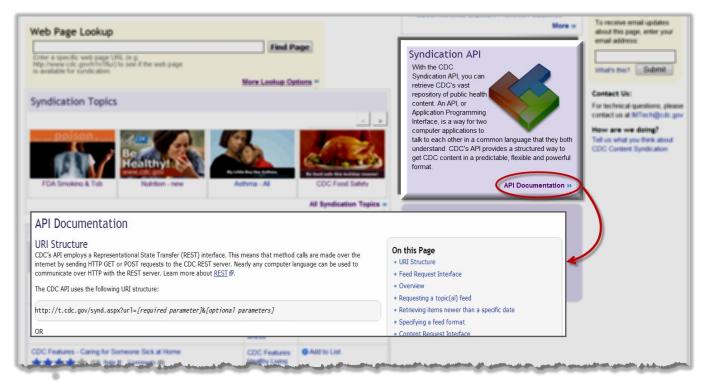


Figure 28 - Syndication API



Additional Information

The Additional Information section provides supplementary information and resources for the following topics:

- Subscribe to Syndication Catalog Updates
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Usage Guidelines
- Report a Problem with a Syndicated Page
- Request a Page to be Syndicated

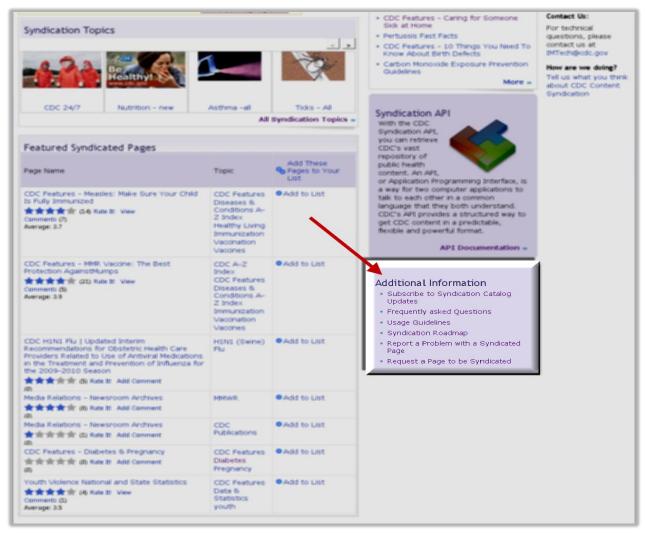


Figure 29 - Additional Information



Usage Guidelines

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provides this syndication service for government, public health, personal, noncommercial, commercial use on a website, weblog, or similar applications provided that the following guidelines are met by subscribers.

Guidelines:

- a. Links redirect the user to the CDC website when the user clicks on them
- b. You do not insert any intermediate page, splash page or other content between the links and the applicable CDC website pages
- c. The use or display does not suggest that CDC promotes or endorses any third party causes, ideas, websites, products or services
- d. The fundamental meaning of the content contained in the Syndication Content Feeds is not changed or distorted
- e. You do not modify content that is linked to by the Syndication Content Feeds
- f. You may not redistribute the Syndication Content Feed
- g. You must provide attribution to CDC or the relevant Content Feed provider adjacent to the Content Feed
- h. CDC reserves the right to include or apply special codes and to track usage of the Syndication Content Feeds

Note: The Content Syndication website and Content Syndication Feeds are subject to change without notice. If you have any questions about these Usage Guidelines, please contact IMTech@cdc.gov.



Frequently Asked Questions

Why is CDC doing this?

To disseminate up-to-date, accurate and timely health messages to our partners and the general public, and increase awareness of and exposure to our health-related partners' websites.

What is Beta Testing?

Beta testing helps us identify and correct technical, content, user experience, and other issues prior to releasing the product for wide-scale production use. Beta testers should try out all aspects of the site including: registering; signing in; finding Web pages that you're interested in syndicating and adding those pages to Your List; and getting the syndication code from this site and implementing on your website. Please report any feedback or issues to IMTech@cdc.gov so we can continue to improve the system.

Where can I get the API / syndication code to add to my site?

Getting the syndication code is very easy using CDC's Content Syndication site. Simply follow these steps:

- 1. Register online to sign up for the service. You will receive a unique Registration ID that CDC uses to track metrics.
- 2. Browse the site to find pages you're interested in syndicating and add those pages to Your List. You can add as many pages as you'd like.
- 3. When you're finished adding syndicated pages to Your List, select Your List in the navigation bar and choose Get Syndicated Code.
- 4. On the Get Syndicated Code page, copy or download the code for the selected syndicated pages, follow the online instructions on that page, and add the syndicated code to your site.

What if I don't see the page I'm interested in syndicating?

Due to the large volume of CDC Web content, not all Web pages are available for syndication; however, CDC is working hard to add new pages as needed. If you don't see a page you're interested in, you can Request a Page to be Syndicated.

Is it possible to input syndicated content into a SharePoint webpage if SharePoint has the HTML editor disabled?

Unfortunately this is not available at this time. Currently, it's not possible to embed the specific HTML script fragments for this purpose into SharePoint.



Glossary

Term	Definition
API	Application Programming Interface(API) is technical specification for interaction
	between a syndication client and the syndication publisher
Content Item	Items available for syndication from the given publisher
Content Lists	List of items available for syndication
Extraction	The process of parsing syndicated content out from source content. E.g. all content in the source document that is inside a block element (DIV) with the CSS class "syndicate"
Hosting Page	A web page containing content that is syndicated from another source usually refers to the final rendered page as it is served to the users of the syndication client.
Hosting Site	A website containing pages (hosting pages) containing syndicated content or the API
	code needed to retrieve syndicated content at render time. Here used synonymously
	with registrant's site or client or partner's site.
Registration ID	Unique ID assigned by CDC to uniquely identify each subscriber.
Subscriber	A syndication client that either engages in feed polling or pub-sub functions to identify
	changes in publisher content and may ingest or include the updated content based on
	that change.
Syndicated	Processed content in place in the hosting page
Content	
Syndication	The process of publishing content for use by entities other than the original creator.
	Used here primarily to describe providing web content for inclusion in to the websites
	of other entities with an emphasis on the availability of real time updates to content.
Syndication	An entity that browses, ingests, or includes content that was created and made available
Client	by a syndication publisher. May or may not be a syndication subscriber; out of channel
	syndication agreements/usage are allowed.
Your List	List of items selected by subscriber for syndication